



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



SD GUARD, SURINAME LEADERS FOSTER PARTNERSHIP DURING CELEBRATION

The South Dakota National Guard continues to foster a relationship with the Republic of Suriname that dates back to 2006 when they were partnered through National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program.

The South American country recently celebrated their 37th year of independence from the Netherlands with festivities similar to Independence Day celebrations held in the U.S. and the SDNG sent representation to support Suriname.

Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson, director of Joint Staff, and Lt. Col. John Weber, SD-Suriname State Partnership Program director, represented the SDNG at National Day, held Nov. 25.

In addition to the festivities, SDNG leadership also met with newly appointed U.S. Ambassador Jay Anania. SDNG leadership also met with Suriname's Minister of Defense and Chief of Defense to discuss future events and exchanges that would jointly support the efforts of both South Dakota and Suriname.

"It's very humbling to have the Minister of Defense and the Chief of the Armed Forces sit down with us," Johnson said. "We discussed, at length, how we can help each other through this partnership."

The SDNG extended an invitation to senior leaders in Suriname's armed forces to attend the annual Golden Coyote training exercise, held in the Black Hills in June. Suriname is also planning on sending officer candidate trainers to Fort Meade, S.D., this summer to get a look at how the 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) runs their Officer Candidate School training.



Inside this issue:

Guardsmen Learn Skills for Unit Substance Abuse Prevention	2
VA Seeks to Expand TBI Benefits	3
Vosika Recognized by ESGR	4
Wreaths Across America	4
National Guard Combat Lifesavers Train in South America	5
Upcoming Events	6

GUARDSMEN LEARN SKILLS FOR UNIT SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

Nearly 40 South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers completed the Counterdrug Joint Substance Abuse Program's Unit Prevention Leader course last week in Sioux Falls. Soldiers learned skills and procedures for drug testing at the unit level and acquired tips for recognizing and preventing substance abuse.

The 40-hour course covers regulations, drug and alcohol education and drug prevention and detection training.

"We put a lot into this training because it saves time in our decentralized testing," said Master Sgt. Paul Brosz, SDNG substance abuse coordinator. "We partner with the Highway Patrol for this class to ensure these Soldiers get the latest information from subject matter experts in the state."

The S.D. Highway Patrol helps support the education side of the course, by bringing in samples of what leaders should look for and what the common drugs look like. Staff Sgt. Rita Eel, 152nd Combat Support Battalion, has been through the course three times throughout her career and says the class has changed in positive ways.

"You learn a lot during the course and it broadens your knowledge, gives a different perspective," said Eel. "The instructors and speakers prove a lot through their experiences alone and the hands-on learning really shows what you need to be doing at the unit level. It has always been good training."

The Counterdrug Joint team also conducts Team Readiness Training during the course. This additional education, in the foundations of communication and tolerance, goes along with the UPL's role to deter and identify risks in their units.

"This training is just another tool to allow UPL Soldiers to be able to recognize and identify issues in the unit," said, Master Sgt. April Wollan, prevention treatment outreach coordinator. "That way they can communicate with the command and reach out to Soldiers who may be struggling in the unit."

South Dakota has more than 1,000 Soldiers trained in the UPL course; roughly a third of the state's Guard members.



VA SEEKS TO EXPAND TBI BENEFITS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is publishing a proposed regulation in the Federal Register that would change its rules to add five diagnosable illnesses which are secondary to service-connected Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

"We must always decide veterans' disability claims based on the best science available, and we will," Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said. "Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence that ensure they receive benefits earned through their service to the country."

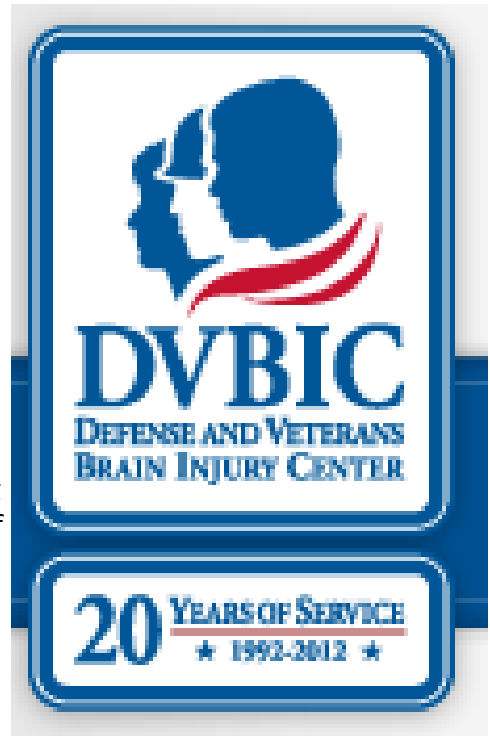
The VA proposes to add a new subsection to its adjudication regulation by revising 38 CFR 3.310 to state that if a veteran who has a service-connected TBI also has one of the five illnesses, then the illness will be considered service connected as secondary to the TBI.

Service connection under the proposed rule depends in part upon the severity of the TBI (mild, moderate, or severe) and the period of time between the injury and onset of the secondary illness. However, the proposed rule also clarifies that it does not preclude a veteran from establishing direct service connection even if those time and severity standards are not met. It also defines the terms mild, moderate, and severe, consistent with Department of Defense (DoD) guidelines.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 60 days. A final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

The VA's decision is based on a report by the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine (IOM), "Gulf War and Health, Volume 7: Long-Term Consequences of TBI." In its report, the IOM's Committee on Gulf War and Health concluded that "sufficient evidence of a causal relationship" - the IOM's highest evidentiary standard - existed between moderate or severe levels of TBI and diagnosed unprovoked seizures. The IOM found "sufficient evidence of an association" between moderate or severe levels of TBI and Parkinsonism; dementias (which VA understands to include presenile dementia of the Alzheimer type and post-traumatic dementia); depression (which also was associated with mild TBI); and diseases of hormone deficiency that may result from hypothalamo-pituitary changes.

Specific information about the Defense and Veteran Brain Injury Center is available at <http://www.dvbic.org/>. Information about Gulf War and VA's services and programs are available at <http://www.publicheath.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/index.asp>.



DEFENSE AND VETERANS BRAIN INJURY CENTER

VOSIKA RECOGNIZED BY ESGR

Lori Vosika, OEF/OIF/OND Program Manager at the VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS), was recently recognized by the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) for her support of her employee's military participation.



HOLIDAY WREATH LAYING TO HONOR VETERANS

The Black Hills National Cemetery in Sturgis (20901 Pleasant Valley Drive) and Hot Springs National Cemetery (500 North 5th Street) will host "Wreaths Across America," a holiday wreath laying ceremony to honor and remember our nation's veterans. The ceremony will be held on Saturday, December 15. The Sturgis ceremony will be held at 10:00 am (MT) and the Hot Springs one will be held at 12:00 noon (MT).

The Worcester Wreath Company, through a campaign called *Wreaths Across America*, began donating holiday wreaths in tribute to Veterans laid to rest at VA's 131 national cemeteries and state Veterans cemeteries in 2006. For each of the past 21 years, they have donated wreaths for gravesites at Arlington National Cemetery. The Civil Air Patrol is once again coordinating wreath ceremonies around the country. For more information on this event, visit the following Web sites:

www.wreaths-across-america.org.

Information about other national cemeteries' participation, visit www.cem.va.gov/cem/features.asp and click on the Wreaths Across America photo.



NATIONAL GUARD COMBAT LIFESAVERS TRAIN IN SOUTH AMERICA

The South Dakota National Guard sent three service members to South America on a medical training exchange with service members from South Dakota's partner nation, Suriname, Nov. 23-25.

Lt. Col. Larry Debuhr, medical administrative officer with the South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Medical Group and South Dakota Army National Guard's Sgt. 1st Class Kelley Crane, combat lifesaver and emergency medical technician, and Staff Sgt. Justin Schiferl, Medical Command readiness noncommissioned officer, conducted combat medical training in Paramaribo with Suriname medics and soldiers.

South Dakota's service members focused their training on advanced life support, which included self-aid and buddy care, wound care, splinting, shock, airway management, IV application and transport.

"It helped raise awareness of what types of medical treatments are available and potentially introduced them to new first aid techniques," Debuhr said.

Suriname's medical personnel trained National Guard members on treatment using limited and natural resources, which included 'bush' medical training and techniques used in the jungle environments throughout Suriname.

"You have to adapt to your surroundings and make the best of what you have to work with," Debuhr said. "They do what they can and work with what they have to make things happen."

"It forced us to step out of our comfort zone and experience different things," Crane said. "Our procedures are more advanced, only because we have access to more training and equipment. Even though it's more difficult for Suriname to get the equipment, it seems as though they excel at survival-type training."

The exchange also emphasized the importance of training on a wide spectrum of topics to include medical maladies that are no longer a concern in the U.S.

"There are many things that are medical concerns in other countries that have been eliminated in the U.S.," said Schiferl. "These items could easily be overlooked or misdiagnosed if they are not considered. By participating in this mission, I was reminded of the importance of a wide scope of operations."

Guard members concluded the exchange by traveling four hours west, to Nickerie, Suriname, where they worked with their counterparts providing medical oversight during National Day ceremonies.

"We were very well received and feel that our work was appreciated," said Debuhr. "We take for granted in this country, to many of the simple amenities. We should be thankful for what we have."



Upcoming Events

Dec. 15—Wreaths Across America

Jan. 1—Happy New Year

Jan. 7—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Jan. 8—SD 88th Legislative Session Opens

Jan. 8—Governor Daugaard's State of the State Address

Feb. 4—VFW Legislative Reception

Feb. 5—American Legion Legislative Reception

Apr. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Jul. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

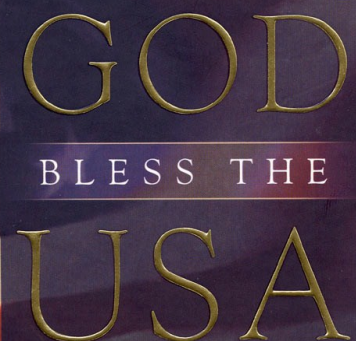
Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am



*MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND HAPPY NEW
YEAR!*

During this season of giving, we give thanks to people like you who give so much all year round. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the South Dakota Department of the Military and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>



GOD
BLESS THE
USA